

# Meeting Minutes

Sierra Front - Northwestern Great Basin Resource Advisory Council  
April 27-28, 2005

BLM Winnemucca Field Office  
Winnemucca, Nevada

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## I. RAC Attendance and Welcome

**9 a.m., Wednesday, April 27, 2005 – Meeting Called to Order** by Chairman Roullier with the following members of the RAC present.

### SIERRA FRONT – NORTHWESTERN GREAT BASIN RESOURCE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Council Member	Resource/Expertise	Wed. 4/27	Thurs. 4/28
William Roullier – Chair	Transportation/ROW	X	X
Larie Trippet – Vice Chair	Public-At-Large	X	X
Laura S. Crane	Environmental		
John E. Dicks	Recreation	X	X
Rochanne Downs	Native Americans	X	X
James Eidel	Wildlife		
John Falen	Nevada Cattlemen		
John Gebhardt	State Agency	X	X
Jerry Hepworth	Energy/Minerals	X	
Patricia Herzog	Elected Official		X
John Mudge	Mining	X	X
Ernest Paine	Livestock	X	X
Vernon Schulze	Wild Horses	X	X
Sherm Swanson	Academic	X	X
D. Craig Young	Archeology	X	X

**BLM staff present** – Gail Givens, Field Manager, Winnemucca Field Office (WFO); Vicki Wood, Associate Field Manager, WFO; Don Hicks, Field Manager, Carson City Field Office (CCFO); Mark Struble, Public Affairs Specialist, CCFO; Jamie Thompson, Public Affairs Officer, WFO; Nancy Thompson, Secretary, WFO; Jo Simpson, Chief, Office of Communications, Nevada State Office (NSO); Dave Hays, Assistant Field Manager, Non Renewable Resources, WFO; Dave Cooper, NCA Manager, WFO; Arlan Hiner, Assistant Field Manager, Renewable Resources WFO; Bob Edwards, Supervisory Realty Specialist, WFO; Laura Levy, GIS Specialist, Non Renewable Resources, WFO; Fred Holzel, Planning & Environmental Coordinator, WFO; Barbara Kehrberg, Realty Specialist, WFO; Jeff Johnson, Resource Management Team Lead, WFO; Janet Hook, Geologist, WFO; Mike Whalen, Fire Management Specialist, WFO; Joey Carmosino, Outdoor Recreation Planner, WFO; Dave Lefevre, Outdoor Recreation Planner, NCA, WFO; Terri Knutson, Environmental Planner, CCFO; Leo Drumm, Outdoor Recreation Planner/Recreation Travel and Access Coordinator, NSO.

**Public present** – Tebeau Piquet, former Sierra Front RAC member; Donna Potter, resident of Gerlach, Nevada; Skip Canfield, Nevada Division of State Lands; Terry Reed, PLS/Coeur Rochester Mine; Susan Lisagor, U.S. Senator Reid's Office; Dan Peterson, California Off-Road Vehicle Association (CORVA); David Batts, Tetra Tech; Jeannette Dahl, Director Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance.

## II. Summary of Motions

MOVED – by Larie Trippet that a subgroup be formed of those RAC members who are interested in the Standards and Guidelines for Wild Horses and Burros, and one or two BLM staff members who are familiar with the Wild Horse and Burro Program to be chaired by Vern Schulze and to meet two or three times before the July RAC meeting and report back to the full RAC with a document that the RAC and the BLM State Director will approve.

SECOND – by John Gebhardt.

DISCUSSION – John Falen will be invited to join the subgroup.

APPROVED – with one abstention by John Mudge.

MOTION – by John Dicks that the RAC form a subgroup to follow the Granite Fox issue, to funnel information to the RAC, and to make recommendations to the RAC which would then make recommendations to BLM, and that an invitation be sent to the Northeast California RAC asking them to include members in the subgroup.

SECOND – by John Mudge.

DISCUSSION – Gail Givens told the RAC that BLM would encourage a subgroup as long as there are no legalities involved. Jo Simpson commented that this is consistent with FACA. The subgroup is advisory to the RAC. Larie Trippet commented that the NCA RAC subgroup came to consensus on issues to help write the document and asked if this would be that type of group. Gail answered no. He would envision a group to look at public input and analysis being done and provide advice as to whether analysis is complete and the right issues have been identified.

APPROVED – by acclamation.

MOVED – by John Dicks that the RAC designate a subgroup to work on the Winnemucca RMP with the Winnemucca Field Office, to be constituted pursuant to the RAC charter, the three groups on the Council, and other groups invited to join on the advice of the RAC chair and vice chair.

SECOND – by Rochanne Downs.

DISCUSSION – Rochanne suggested that equal numbers from the RAC Pods be represented.

AMENDMENT to the motion – to include the list of members generated at the RAC meeting [see list on page 26]. The amendment was accepted by the Mover and Second.

PASSED – by acclamation.

### **III. Summary of Action Assignments**

- The RAC was to form a Wild Horse & Burro Guidelines Subgroup.
- WFO was asked to form a Granite Fox Power Plant EIS subgroup to look at public input and analysis and provide advice as to whether analysis is complete and the right issues have been identified.
- WFO was asked to form a Winnemucca RMP Subgroup.

### **IV. Minutes from the Meeting in Carson City/Nevada State Office, January 27 & 28, 2005**

MOVED – by John Dicks to Approve.

SECOND – by John Gebhardt.

DISCUSSION – The following correction to the minutes was requested:

On page 11, paragraph 3, line 3, change “The Nevada Indian Commission is a state agency that would be a third party in the government to government relationship,” to “shouldn’t be a third party...”

APPROVED – by acclamation with above correction.

### **V. Field Managers’ Reports**

#### **A. Carson City Field Manager Don Hick’s Report**

1. **WRITTEN SUMMARY OF THE REPORT WAS DISTRIBUTED.**
2. **ADDITIONAL ITEMS COVERED ORALLY.**
  - a. CCFO held a public land sale of 30 acres suitable for residential development in April. The parcel was appraised at \$297,000 and sold for \$608,000. Funds go into the BACA account for lands identified or proposed for sale prior to 2000. Jo Simpson added that this money also funds the ability to do rural land sales. Several other land sales are in the works.
  - b. Wild horse gathers were suspended due to weather. An aerial survey will be conducted in May. There is a small herd in the Dogskins tentatively scheduled for gather in 2006. This gather is budget dependent.
  - c. CCFO has approved development of a geothermal plant southeast of Fallon. The site has historic and other issues. There is pressure from the President’s office to make energy a priority. BLM is trying to be responsive to those needs as well as other concerns.
  - d. Management of the Yerington Mine site has been centralized in the BLM Nevada State Office. BLM is still

doing site security. The south side of the area is still not fenced.

Vern Schulze asked if there is concern about an air quality hazard on windy days. Don answered that air monitors were just put out in the past few months. Dust is definitely a hazard in some areas if you ingest it. Ultimately these areas will have to be stabilized.

- e. A schedule of projects for fuels reductions is in the works. There will be a prescribed fire in Alpine County in early May.
- f. The Ruhenstroth Emergency Vehicle Closure was issued in March 2004. BLM has finally come to agreement with the local OHV community and the county to establish routes through the area. The Pine Nut Mountain Trails Association will produce some signs and a kiosk.

Rochanne Downs asked if the plan has been taken to the Washoe Tribe. Don said he can follow up on this. The Tribe was out on the ground to help establish trails. Rochanne commented that the final plan should be taken to the Tribe for their approval.

- g. There has been a huge effort in the field office to work with issues at Sand Mountain. The suggested volunteer route system isn't working as well as had been hoped. The Sand Mountain blue butterfly study is being finished. BLM is working with the Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance. BLM has Tribal concerns, management concerns with public safety, carrying capacity, law enforcement. BLM has limited funding to run facilities at Sand Mountain and has to look at other ways of getting money or scale back the number of visitors.

Rochanne Downs commented some of the key staff has been detailed to other areas, and asked if staff is going to be pulled off again. The timeline deadline for filing on the butterfly was this past Saturday. What is the BLM plan? Don answered the original park ranger went to another job. A park ranger will be pulled from the Silver Saddle operation. One staff member will be back in a couple weeks. The BLM national law enforcement office came up with funding for emergency medical service people from California and additional law enforcement officers. This will not limit staff's ability to handle safety issues. Rochanne also commented on eggs being thrown and windows broken in a BLM law enforcement vehicle over Easter weekend. She asked how this is being handled. She also expressed concern about an area where the OHV community has put human remains. The Tribe has been

told they cannot put remains of their ancestors on federal lands. Don answered that it is illegal to put remains on federal lands. BLM would like to see the OHV community remove the remains and put up a memorial in their place. Details have not been worked out. Don asked for a private meeting with Rochanne on this issue. She suggested that should be done when Don introduces himself to the Tribal Council.

Larie Trippet asked Don to make sure that what BLM reviews of Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance strategies is a true consensus of all the players.

Rochanne commented that the proposal has to be implementable and realistic.

Sherm Swanson asked if the fuels projects in wildland and urban interface areas will be moved outside these areas. Don answered BLM is looking at those.

John Dicks asked what happened to the intent to sue by the Center for Biological Diversity. Don answered that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) hasn't made a determination yet.

## ***B. Winnemucca Field Manager Gail Given's Report***

1. WRITTEN SUMMARY OF THE REPORT WAS DISTRIBUTED.
2. ADDITIONAL ITEMS COVERED ORALLY.
  - a. Porter Spring has been cleaned up, and is one of many areas WFO is looking at for cleanup in the next couple of years.
  - b. Many of the Fire items talk about staffing and recruitment which is ongoing. The Assistant FMO is in place.
  - c. Gail will attend four upcoming scoping meetings for the Winnemucca RMP.
  - d. The WFO has 64 active NEPA projects.
  - e. Horses and burros have been in the news recently, particularly in connection with the billboard that was recently put up east of Battle Mountain. WFO continues with the gather schedule.
  - f. There are many current range projects. WFO continues to get Multiple Use Decisions appealed. This seems to be the norm now.
  - g. Staff has been unable to get out to the field to inspect all range improvement projects. WFO would like RAC advice on the proposal to ask permittees to inspect and report the condition of the range improvements on their allotments. This issue will be pursued at a later time. BLM is looking at more stewardship.

Vern Schulze asked, assuming complete inventory of range maintenance needs, will BLM get funds? Arlan Hiner, WFO AFM Renewable Resources, answered that operators are responsible for costs of range maintenance projects. BLM is looking at replacing projects that are outdated.

John Dicks asked what incentive there is for a permittee to do these types of projects when federal agencies may cut a permittee loose. Arlan answered we seem to have a lot of projects that are not being maintained. We haven't been able to inspect all of the projects. John asked if BLM can give a longer lease. Arlan answered that the typical lease is 10 years.

Vern commented that he was concerned with a lot of the waters being used by wild horses and asked what the incentive is for the permittee to maintain the waters for that use. Ernie Paine answered that the incentive is zero. This water is being maintained by permittees for the use of stock. There is no incentive to maintain water for wild horses. This is a contentious issue.

Terry Reed, retired WFO field manager attending as a representative of PLS/Coeur Rochester Mine, commented this has been an issue for a long time. Operators are bound by certain requirements. The process of federal agencies taking action when projects are poorly maintained has not been good. We should be able to get past the issue of the use of federal wild horse and burro money for improvements as well as for gathers.

Jo Simpson commented that at some point in time there was a provision for joint filing on a water right. BLM would file for wild horses. This is no longer legal. You have to be a livestock owner to file for livestock use.

Ernie Paine added that anyone trying to file has problems with off season use and maintenance during off season use.

- h. In the Wildlife and Sensitive Species area – The WFO Annual Kids' Fishing Day event will be held the first part of June. There are a number of environmental assessments going on. There are a number of developments going on with Lahontan cutthroat trout (LCT).

Rochanne Downs commented that fire management for fuels has to be used in Edwards Creek. A fire in this area would wipe out the LCT. She asked if there is an area in the field office where this is also a problem. Could some of the Tribal members help with this issue? Gail answered that this issue could certainly be part of the discussion.

Sherm Swanson commented that it might be quite appropriate to have a wildfire burn through some of these areas.

- i. Staff is participating in local area sage-grouse planning meetings.
- j. There was an article in the newspaper this week related to the Water Canyon Plan. The plan will result in improving the recreation experience in the canyon by the installation of picnic tables and development and signing of an interpretive trail.
- k. The NCA staff has received another award, the American Planning Association Award for the NCA Resource Management Plan as the 2004 Outstanding Federal Project. Gail commented that it is exciting that there have been two awards for this effort.
- l. Dave Cooper, NCA Manager, briefed the RAC on the RAC NCA Plan Implementation Subgroup. The subgroup reports to the Sierra Front and the Northeast California RACs as a non advisory group giving information to the parent RACs. There are 16 people in the group representing a whole array of interests. BLM is still seeking representation for the local Tribe and a representative for state government. The group will try to do everything by consensus. Dave Cooper is the chair. The vice chair is Chuck Dodd of Oregon California Trails Association (OCTA). The group discussed budget and funding trends for the NCA and how this would likely impact implementation planning for the NCA RMP. They will break this down into concerns for the next three to five years. They talked about a draft sign plan. There was group consensus to install two kiosks at the portal areas – the old town site of Sulphur and the Soldier Meadows turnoff road outside Gerlach. The subgroup suggested a small workgroup composed of Dave Valentine, NCA archeologist; Craig Young, Sierra Front RAC; Chuck Dodd; and Donna Potter, citizen of Gerlach. The group will look at the two sites that were vandalized last year. Recommended dates for the next meeting are over Memorial Day Weekend or June 3-4, to include a one day meeting and a field trip. Dave Cooper furnished notes from the first meeting to the RAC.
- m. Vicki Wood is moving on to become field manager of the BLM El Centro California District. Recruitment action to fill behind Vicki and the vacancy for AFM for Support Services has started. WFO has a list of qualified applicants



for the Planning and Environmental Coordinator to fill behind Jeff Johnson.

Gail commented that it is heartening to see how much volunteerism and other partnerships are going on. RAC members are to be complimented for their efforts.

Dave Cooper told the RAC that the NCA is envisioning a newspaper format newsletter that should be out in the next month.

## **VI. RAC Wild Horse Guidelines**

Vern Schulze told the RAC that they are a little handicapped in establishing Wild Horse and Burro Standards because the Secretary of the Interior has to approve them. He tried to piggyback on five Standards developed for livestock which deal with habitat. The health of the animals and the health of the herds are not in the established Standards. Vern added draft Standards 6 and 7 to cover this. None of the Standards have been reviewed by BLM state or district offices. Jo Simpson commented that State Director Bob Abbey is comfortable approving Standards developed subsequent to the existing Standards. Abbey has approved the added Standards for Wild Horses and Burros for the other two RACs. Once a RAC has approved the Standards they will go to the field managers for their review and then to the State program lead.

Vern told the RAC that ideally it would be best to have statewide Guidelines.

It is the RAC's initial recommendation to get this document approved.

John Dicks commented that he sees holes in what has been written. What is the on-the-ground impact of the document? What is expected from the RAC? He said it seems like there is a conflict in fact, that there is a limited amount of natural grazing available. Livestock and wild horses and burros will compete for these areas. Vern answered that this document is an overview that will be implemented in planning documents. Jo Simpson commented that livestock Standards and Guidelines are being used in reviews of grazing permits. John asked how much effort the RAC should be putting into the document.

Sherm Swanson questioned the meaning of adoptability in Guideline #10, "adoptability should not be a primary reason for modifying the characteristics of wild horse and burro herds or for determining which animals are to be removed." Vern told him one age bracket of horses should not be routinely removed.

Sherm Swanson commented that there may be room for an additional Standard and maybe some Guidelines that go with it.

MOVED – by Larie Trippet that a subgroup be formed of those RAC members who are interested in the Standards and Guidelines for Wild Horses and Burros, and one or two BLM staff members who are familiar with the Wild Horse and Burro Program to be chaired by Vern Schulze and to meet two or three times before the July RAC meeting and report back to the full RAC with a document that the RAC and the BLM State Director will approve.

SECOND – by John Gebhardt.

DISCUSSION – John Falen will be included in the subgroup.

APPROVED – with one abstention by John Mudge.

John Falen who was to present BLM Wild Horse and Burro Sale Authority updates to the RAC was not present at the meeting.

## **VII. Granite Fox Coal-Fired Power Plant Project Update**

Barbara Kehrberg, WFO Realty Specialist, and Fred Holzel, WFO Planning and Environmental Coordinator, along with Jeff Johnson, Resource Management Team Lead, and Laura Levy, GIS Specialist, presented a Powerpoint on the Granite Fox Coal-Fired Power Plant Project. This was the same presentation given to groups around the area including the other two Nevada RACs.

There are three power plants proposed in Nevada. Granite Fox is the biggest and one of the biggest projects in the U.S. The proposed plant will have the capacity to power 1,450,000 homes per year. It could power all of Nevada with the exception of casinos and businesses.

The driving distance from various towns to the project area is Gerlach – 10 miles; Empire – 17 miles; Reno/Winnemucca – 110 miles; Cedarville, California – 74 miles; Alturas, California – 97 miles and Susanville, California – 114 miles. The project will be near the Black Rock-High Rock NCA, Wilderness Study Areas and Wilderness Areas. There are no buffer zones. It is in Washoe County. Unique resources and events in the area include hot springs, Emigrant Trails, playa events, speed records, Burning Man, and the first civilian space launch.

There are only 500 residents in Gerlach and Empire together. There is an industrial site in Empire, U.S. Gypsum.

The site is 2,000 acres on private lands to include a waste deposition site for fly ash and calcium sulfate, the power plant site and worker camp during construction phase, and grounding electrode as the collection point for the current.

Approximately 700 acres are on public lands to include a 1.5-mile haul road to the waste deposition site, a 1-mile link to Bonneville 500 kV DC transmission line, an 8-mile railroad spur to transport coal from the existing Union Pacific tracks, a 55-mile pipeline

to move 16,000 acre-feet of water per year (an acre-foot of water is the quantity used by a family of four in a year), and a 15-mile link from Empire for power during construction. Three BLM offices are involved – WFO, Eagle Lake California Field Office, and Surprise California Field Office which is involved as a courtesy. WFO is the lead office on the project. Fred Holzel is WFO NEPA lead.

This is an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared per federal regulations to analyze potential impacts to the entire project study area for both public and private lands. The types of concerns analyzed will include air quality, water, socio-economic values, cultural resources, environmental justice, reclamation, geology and minerals, recreation, wildlife and fisheries, livestock, wild horses, special status species, soils and vegetation, noxious weeds, land use authorization and access, and visual resources.

An application has been received for Rights-of-Way (ROWs). A third party contractor has been selected, Golder Associates. A Notice of Intent (NOI) has been published in the *Federal Register* starting a 60-day comment period which ends June 22.

Process Step 1 is environmental studies and analysis plus public meetings and comments. All this information will be put together into the draft EIS. The draft will be out about this time next year.

Washoe County is a cooperating agency. Lassen County, California has expressed interest. (NOTE: Lassen County has subsequently requested to be a cooperating agency.) The State of Nevada was asked to be cooperating agency but declined.

Process Step 2 – the final EIS goes to the public for comment.

Process Step 3 is the Record of Decision (ROD).

Estimated timeline –

2004 – applications received by BLM

2005 – selected contractor, published NOI, public scoping meetings

2006 – publish draft EIS, public meetings and comments, review comments and publish final EIS

2007 – resolve comments on final ROD

The life of the power plant is 50-60 years according to an estimate by Granite Fox.

The analysis will drive the draft. Granite Fox would like to begin construction in 2007 and begin operations in 2010-11 with 150 workers.

Comment sheets will be given to the RAC members.

Vern Schulze commented that it seems there is some effort to change air quality rules nationally, particularly mercury. Will this affect the ability to construct this plant? Fred Holzel answered if the regulations change they have to comply. John Mudge commented

that the final rule came out on mercury for power plants. Several Democrats would like a stay on the rule change by EPA. Fred commented we are at the beginning of the project. Mercury will be a concern and will be analyzed as part of the process.

Larie Trippet asked if the land will be rehabbed at the end of the power plant. Fred answered it is on private land. Barb Kehrberg added there will be rehab on public lands. John Gebhardt commented that Nevada Department of Environmental Protection (NDEP) requires rehab of private lands. Terri Knutson, CCFO Environmental Planner, added that Washoe County has strict rehab regs.

John Dicks asked if the 700 acres of public land is the lynch pin for the project. Fred Holzel answered they need the ROWs to bring in the materials. The ROWs cross public lands.

Sherm Swanson commented if the capacity of the DC line is used for this project the capacity will not be there for use of geothermal and other power. Fred answered yes. Barb Kehrberg added that wind and geothermal energy could pass through the plant. Bill Roullier commented it takes a plant this size to connect to the DC line. Smaller projects cannot connect into this line. He does not see a connection between this project and green projects in Nevada. Craig Young asked why spend this kind of money for this option. Bill answered it may be their only option for this market.

John Mudge commented that western coal is pretty low in mercury, especially Powder River coal.

John Dicks asked if global warming is one of the effects being analyzed. Fred answered BLM will keep an eye on biodiversity which is a part of global effects. We can certainly look into global warming.

Donna Potter, member of the public, asked if the Bonneville line will go to southern California. Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (LADWP) is the southern part of the Bonneville line. Sempra Energy (the parent company of Granite Fox) is looking into utilizing the remainder of the LADWP line. LADWP will decide who will tap into this line and where the connection will be. (Donna distributed articles from the San Diego and LA papers, and a brochure from the Nevada Clean Energy Coalition.) One of the coalition members asked Donna to ask the RAC to consider a subgroup on this issue.

Rochanne Downs asked for a copy of the Powerpoint presentation. Barb Kehrberg said she will look into this. BLM may be able to have Sempra put this on their Web site.

MOTION – by John Dicks that the RAC form a subgroup to follow the Granite Fox issue, to funnel information to the RAC, and to make recommendations to the RAC which would then make recommendations to BLM, and that an invitation be sent to the Northeast California RAC asking them to include members in the subgroup.

SECOND – by John Mudge.

DISCUSSION – Gail Givens told the RAC that BLM would encourage a subgroup as long as there are no legalities involved. Jo Simpson commented that this is consistent with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). The subgroup is advisory to the RAC. Larie Trippet commented that the NCA RAC subgroup came to consensus on issues to help write the document and asked if this would be that type of group. Gail answered no. He would envision a group to look at public input and analysis being done and provide advice as to whether analysis is complete and provides the right issues.

APPROVED – by acclamation.

Jerry Hepworth will chair the subgroup. He was asked to invite the Northeast California RAC if they would like to participate. Sierra Front RAC members John Mudge, Rochanne Downs and John Dicks volunteered to be members of the subgroup. Laura Crane and Jim Eidel, not present at the meeting, were suggested as members by the RAC. Donna Potter also volunteered.

Gail Givens commented that it may be a little early to form the group, but not too early to invite the California RAC to participate. Fred Holzel commented that the public comment period will not end until June 22. He suggested having something in place by then.

## **VIII. CCFO Energy RMP Amendment/EIS Orientation to Draft Document**

The Energy RMP Amendment/EIS was originally part of the Churchill County Plan. CCFO split out the Salt Wells Geothermal Power Plant. They wanted a plan that BLM could actually use.

The objective is for a potential lessee to be able to look at a map and see where they could or could not lease. Areas with special designations are closed. Wilderness Study Areas, scenic areas, VRM 1 and 2 are all closed.

Other areas that could be impacted are open to leasing with moderate to major constraints – seasonal closures to limited occupancy, etc.

The draft Plan Amendment will be out next month.

CCFO has 61 geothermal lease applications.

When the lease goes into the exploration phase BLM has to do an EA.

Gail Givens commented that BLM is being driven by the President's energy policy at this time.

John Dicks asked what happens if a new wilderness area is designated. Terri Knutson answered that precludes mineral activity. Jo Simpson added it takes Congress to designate or release an area as wilderness.

North Valleys Water Pipeline draft will be out May 13.

## **IX. Coeur-Rochester Mine Plan EIS**

Coeur Rochester Inc. (CRI) submitted Amendment #7 to the Plan of Operation for expansion and closure of the Rochester and Nevada Packard mines.

The Rochester Mine is located in Pershing County about 28 miles northeast of Lovelock. The average elevation of the site is 7,000 feet. This impacts the amount of precipitation pertinent to closure issues. The mining method is open pit open 24/7. The final product is silver/gold dora.

Coeur acquired the property in 1983. Construction began in 1986 and production in September 1986.

Coeur Rochester mines, crushes and leaches 9 million tons of ore annually.

Since the beginning of operations in 1986 Rochester has produced over 105,000,000 ounces of silver and 1,100,000 ounces of gold. At this site gold is essentially a by-product of the silver production.

The mine has been a significant economic contributor to the area. In 2004 the mine contributed \$15 million in payroll and benefits, \$969,000 in sales and use tax, \$575,000 in net proceeds tax, \$426,000 in property tax, and \$89,000 in payroll tax.

Coeur Rochester employs 250 employees who commute from Lovelock, Winnemucca and Fernley.

The current expected end of mining will be 2007. The expected end of leaching will be 2015. CRI is currently approved to disturb approximately 1,714.3 acres on private and public land within the permit boundary.

With Amendment 7, total approved disturbance would be about 1800 acres. Most likely only 1700 acres will actually be disturbed but the approval of Amendment 7 would allow Coeur to take advantage of market price increases and prevent wasting of potentially economic silver resources. Of the total disturbance 400 areas have been concurrently reclaimed.

There are several reasons why BLM is requiring an expansion and closure EIS including public comments raising closure concerns received for the Amendment 6 Environmental Assessment (EA), and potential impacts from the current closure plan. Therefore BLM

stipulated a modification to the plan of operations concerning final mine closure for analysis of potential impacts under an EIS. While doing this, it was agreed to also analyze all other potential expansions that might be reasonably foreseeable through the end of the Rochester/Nevada Packard mine life.

BLM asked Rochester if there was anything else it wanted to extend the mine life and that's why expansion is included in the EIS.

Potential expansion is 103 acres.

- Rochester Pit Expansion – 60 acres

- Haul roads around the pit – 4 acres

- Stage III heap – 73 acres

- Stage II heap 30-foot height increase

None of the fluids will be discharged. Existing springs will be returned to the channel from which they came.

Closure proposals for the heap leach pad include zero discharge, short and long term evaporation of heap effluent solutions, creation of a wetland/woodland system for long term evapotranspiration of the heap solutions and creation of a pit lake in the Rochester pit. The proposal is to partially fill the pit lake.

The pit lake will start forming in 85 to 100 years. A wetland/woodland system for evapotranspiration will be constructed for the long term. Fluids will move from uphill to downhill from pad to pad to pad. Waste material is being replaced back into the pit behind the work being done in the Nevada Packard Mine.

A third party contractor, SRK/EDAW, has been selected. The public scoping period ended April 15, 2005. Scoping meetings were held in Winnemucca and Lovelock. Fourteen scoping comments were received. Native American consultation has begun.

Scoping issues include ground water quality, surface water quality, possible acid mine drainage, grazing on the reclaimed heaps, wildlife and wildlife habitat, socio-economic, geochemical modeling, and monitoring.

Next on the schedule are completing the Data Adequacy Review, finalizing the Preparation Plan, and beginning preparation of the draft EIS.

BLM anticipates publication of the draft EIS for public comment in December 2005.

John Dicks asked if some of the areas will need to be fenced permanently. Janet Hook, WFO Geologist answered that there is no fencing proposed. There is some talk of fencing livestock off the heap areas.

There will be no monitoring of the pit lake possible until the lake starts to fill approximately 100 years from now. There will have to be a decision in place. There will be monitoring of the heap leaches anywhere between five and 30 years.

Jerry Hepworth commented that the closure effort has been a real challenge, but the organization is up to the challenge. They used natural systems and woodland wetlands to handle long term issues.

BLM intends to write the EA so as not to preclude future post metal mining ideas.

## **X. BLM-Nevada OHV Route Inventory & Designation Strategy**

Leo Drumm, Nevada State Office Outdoor Recreation Planner, Travel/Access Coordinator, presented the BLM-Nevada OHV route inventory and designation strategy.

OHV management started in 1972 with Executive Order No. 11644 requiring designations and regulations to implement those designations. These were initiated with 43 CFR 8340.

Most of the areas were left open to cross country travel especially in Nevada. In the 1980s OHV switched to 4-wheel ATVs. About 1998-99 BLM strategy evolved to give managers tools to manage ATV routes. BLM is reviewing this strategy now.

BLM is looking at the inventory process during land use planning. We need to encourage people to stay on designated roads. Route and area designations will be identified.

The revised Land Use Planning Handbook has a whole section on travel needs including pedestrians, foot, land, air travel. BLM will complete a defined travel management network during the land use planning process. We need a good inventory of what is out there.

The Nevada Travel Management Team has met three times. Recreation, minerals, cultural, GIS, and management people served on the team.

GPS will create the maps for the inventory. BLM administers 48 million acres in Nevada – 37,000,000 open, 9,000,000 limited, 2,000,000 closed. The estimated number of OHVs in Nevada is 425,435. Of that number there are 210,113 OHVs, real 4-wheel drive vehicles; 12,449 ATVs, not registered for street use; 48,621 OHMs, off-highway motorcycles or dirt bikes; and 38,202 snowmobiles. Sand buggies, etc, can be registered for street use.



Nevada Travel Management Team recommendations include

- Travel management planning and route inventories should be completed using an interdisciplinary team approach. These will be GPSed first.
- All affected programs should participate in planning and funding for travel management planning and inventories.
- Areas of intensive use or resource management concerns should be prioritized and funded to collect data needed for route inventory and designation.
- The rest of the state would be inventoried by digitizing roads from digital ortho photo quarter quads (high tech aerial photographs). Eventually all routes should be GPSed on the ground and designated.

Everyone is affected by travel management concerns. BLM is looking for internal funding for travel inventories from every program that benefits.

The team is looking to inventory roads, intensive use sand dune areas, historic trails that are cultural resources.

Leo showed the RAC a photo of a resource grade hand-held GPS unit and a map of field office travel management concerns.

Data collection could be done by staff but more often will probably use volunteers. These volunteers will need to be trained in the use of GPS equipment and ATVs. Contractors will be used. These people go out on dirt bikes and will usually be paired with a volunteer. Students from colleges of engineering will be digitizing the photographs.

Once some routes are collected BLM can move into designation. The key is to get the public involved early in the process. What BLM wants to know from the public is: do we have an accurate representation of what is on the ground? In the end, if it's not on the designation it won't be open.

Then criteria for designation will be developed involving all the players. The team can invent its own method for designation or use one of several methods already out there. Then the review process begins.

John Dicks asked what the end result is and will you be able to enforce it. Leo answered there will be something out there to mark the designations. It will be hard to get people to stay on designated routes. It will be at least a 10-year process. In the intensive use areas in Nevada there will probably be designations. As you get farther and farther out it will probably be existing roads and trails.

Larie Trippet commented there is an element in the OHV guidelines to be used in the land use planning process to plan for the demand for OHV use.

Vern Schulze commented that this is a dynamic situation where new trails will be made. Inventory will never end. Leo answered at least there will be some thought to the new trails, resource issues will be considered.

These will all be dynamic plans set up to manage change.

Rochanne Downs asked what the time schedule is. Leo answered GPSing within a year. Rochanne commented that she has concerns about cultural resources. How will they be protected with more vehicles that can go over everything? Leo answered we don't know what the answer is right now. There are some serious limitations to funding.

Don Hicks commented the decision on the designations will be made during the land use planning process. The inventories will also be done during the process.

Terry Reed commented that all the people should be involved during the inventory process. All the aspects of routes should be considered. Sometimes it's just the enjoyment of the ride, not where the route goes.

Jerry Hepworth suggested many people would be interested in the aerial photograph product. Funding might be available from some of these groups.

Sherm Swanson asked is your work being done in cooperation with the [U.S.] Forest Service. Leo answered yes. They are already involved. We want seamless transition to different agencies' public land.

John Mudge asked how this pertains to non-motorized. Leo answered the inventory will primarily pertain to motorized. A lot of it will be a function of what we can do.

The Nevada Travel Management Team was all BLM people across all field offices.

John Dicks asked if anyone on the travel group is from the Nevada travel people. A Nevada state agency is inducing people to come and who is going to maintain the routes so these people don't have safety issues that are sue-able. Leo answered that all of this needs to be taken into account. Certainly the office of tourism needs to be involved. Don Hicks commented BLM has not been involved with the Nevada tourism board. Larie Trippet commented the RAC wrote a letter to them about three years ago saying they need to include Tread Lightly, etc. They included it, sort of. Don continued local communities are not particularly well coordinated with BLM either. We need to make those links because long term they are going to affect the use of public lands. Jo Simpson commented this is only the first step in this process. We had to get the field offices to come to consensus before involving other groups.

## **XI. General Public Comment Period**

Jeannette Dahl, Director of Lahontan Valley Environmental Alliance, told the RAC that the Alliance was asked to put together a Sand Mountain blue butterfly working group to come up with a conservation plan to preserve the blue butterfly while continuing the use of the area which includes adaptive management. This is a draft plan at this time.

Claudia Funara, CCFO Wildlife Management Biologist, has been very involved in the group. There has also been a lot of participation by the Shoshone Paiute Tribe and great participation from the off highway vehicle organizations. Friends of Sand Mountain, Churchill County, City of Fallon, Fallon Chamber of Commerce, ranchers, and members of the public have given a lot of support and spent a lot of time. One of the strategies is designation of routes in our draft plan. BLM has now indicated that its intention is to close the entire shrub habitat by fencing. Our other proposed strategies include increased education, increased law enforcement, closure of shrub habitat to livestock, limiting user density, etc. These strategies involve a lot of funding from the communities. Churchill County, City of Fallon and user groups are very interested in the continuation of the blue butterfly but not the closure of the habitat. We are concerned that if the area is closed our hours of participation in this plan will have been a waste. We are under the gun to get this plan completed. USFWS has indicated that there may be an emergency listing of the blue butterfly.

Larie Trippet asked if the proposed action that BLM wants to take meets USFWS standards. Jeannette answered no. For our plan to be effective we have to have the signature of the BLM.

Rochanne Downs commented I think where the group's frustration is coming from is the cost of the fencing which is \$4 million. The group feels that all their work is down the tubes. BLM is going to review this draft plan. My stance has always been that whatever recommendation this group makes has to be implementable. Jeannette answered this is where outside funding comes in. We have been encouraged by USFWS to put these things in the plan whether the funding is there or not. We're trying to move forward on that as soon as possible.

Larie Trippet asked if everyone in the Alliance is in agreement on the strategies. Jeannette answered the designated route strategy is the only one the group has completed and the only one the group has agreed on.

Don Hicks asked where the fencing strategy has come from. The fencing strategy has not come from me. Next week I am meeting with my staff to go over these recommendations and find out what we can recommend. Jeannette answered that fencing is what we felt BLM was looking at. Don continued I think this came from a worst-case scenario, if the species is listed, and what we would have to do to protect it. I don't have a choice there but I do have a choice in collaboration with other groups. This is a work in progress.

Jeannette commented that the Alliance just wanted me to give the RAC an update and hear any recommendations they have. I think much of this disconnect has come because we are in a hurry. USFWS has put pressure on us.

John Dicks commented I think you are a megaphone to Churchill County. We have tried more and more in this group to meld different attitudes and groups. There is an attitude out there where BLM signs have been broken off or yanked out of the ground at Sand Mountain. The RAC passed a motion that law enforcement be ratcheted up out there. There is an element among users at Sand Mountain that, in my opinion, are criminals. The image some of the rest of us are getting is not very good. There needs to be cooperation between county law enforcement and BLM law enforcement. Protecting the butterfly is good, but this other issue hasn't been talked about. Jeannette commented that there is a new sheriff [in Churchill County].

Dan Peterson, Nevada Director of CORVA, told the RAC that he is now spending most of his time in Nevada. I'm here to represent the people from California who are coming here. I have to give my apologies to BLM and the rest of Nevada for the egg throwing situation. I hope it's an isolated incident. The meeting we had last Tuesday, my thought [was] of new management at BLM. I am getting a mistrust built up here that I don't like. There have been some things in the past two years that I have heard from BLM staff and some documents that lead me to not trust BLM Carson City. The BLM representative said Tuesday "that concept is out of my scope of what I was told to agree with." I brought up the question of where is the BLM stance then. It all leads up to what the biologist told us when this issue got started – close it. That is where this came from. Elayn Briggs [CCFO Associate Field Manager] couldn't answer that question, whether BLM is willing to bend or not. If they're not willing to bend we're done.

One other subject is education. CORVA of California has opened a new program called "Into Dirt" for young kids to get them to stay on the designated routes. We have determined to go into the schools to teach the young, not waiting until the kids are 14 or 16. We are looking for grants to do this. We tell the kids why they are being asked to stay on designated routes. I hope that you guys can take our lead in teaching the young kids that this is the way to go. Riding is just a way to get from one place to the other. Right at this time you are probably a year behind where California is with the routing system. California is the only state that is getting this funding for the route system. How does this group right here intend to get the public involved? What is going to be your method for doing that? I stopped at the local bike shop over lunch. The owner had no idea about the designated routes system in Nevada. This group has a long way to go to get their arms around this. I've seen 30-minute ads on TV in California about coming to Nevada.

Jerry Hepworth commented I think your education efforts are well founded.

Sherm Swanson commented I attended the Northeast Nevada RAC meeting on monitoring. They would like to interact with the other RACs. I have been working with others on a revision to the 1984 range monitoring handbook. The necessity of monitoring

for the question “are you meeting your objectives” was not included in the old book. We want to bring in the thought process of managing for objectives. Riparian management should be put into the handbook, the idea of how to protect the transition from one threshold to another, differentiating among herbivores, monitoring off highway vehicle use. We want to keep the idea of short term monitoring versus long term monitoring. We will keep the technique of maintaining long term data sets based on the Public Lands Council and BLM Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that there would be a common protocol that people would be taught that would be put into the monitoring handbook. Part of the protocol will be permittees’ responsibility to do short term monitoring and long term monitoring photography. The resource agencies would be tasked with more of the long term monitoring. At some point, perhaps in July, I could present to the RAC more details on what the range monitoring handbook would say. If all the RACs endorse the handbook it would provide a basis for all the agencies across the state to get on with monitoring.

John Dicks commented I think what Dan [Peterson] had to say about education is good wisdom. It might be worth some time for us to discuss as part of the back country use program where we could make the most impact. School might be the place.

Dan Peterson commented the one way that we’re solving that funding problem is putting together the non-profit organization that will apply for major funding.

**The meeting adjourned for the day at approximately 4:45 pm.**

**The meeting was called back to order by Chairman Roullier at 8:05 am.**

## **XII. Winnemucca Resource Management Plan Progress Report/Scoping/RAC Involvement/Discuss RAC Subgroup**

Jeff Johnson, WFO Resource Management Team Lead, introduced David Batts of TetraTech, the planning contractor for the Winnemucca RMP. David has worked on several other plans. TetraTech operates in a direct partnership with BLM.

Land use plans guide management actions on public lands covered by the plan. Section 202 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) requires BLM to develop, maintain, and revise land use plans.

The WFO is starting a land use plan now for several reasons. The current land use plans (Paradise-Denio and Sonoma-Gerlach Management Framework Plans) were approved in July 1982 and have become outdated in areas. The current plans do not satisfactorily address new or emerging issues such as declining habitat conditions for sage-grouse, off-highway vehicle use, Standards for Rangeland Health, hard rock mining reclamation and

closure, and noxious weeds. The planning effort is a WFO and NSO priority. A land use plan will reduce the potential for litigation and appeals.

The Winnemucca land use plan will be a Resource Management Plan (RMP).

FLPMA key policy statements include

- The public lands be retained in Federal ownership unless as a result of the land use planning procedure it is determined that disposal of a particular parcel will serve the national interest.
- Goals and objectives will be established by law as guidelines for public land use planning and that management be on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield unless otherwise specified by law.
- The public lands be managed in a manner that will protect the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource, and archeological values; and where appropriate will preserve and protect certain public lands in their natural condition, will provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife and domestic animals; and provide for outdoor recreation and human occupancy and use.
- The public lands be managed in a manner which recognizes the Nation's need for domestic sources of minerals, food, timber, and fiber from the public lands including implementation of the Mining and Minerals Policy Act of 1970.

FLPMA key principles of land use planning include

- Multiple use
- Systematic interdisciplinary approach
- Rely on inventories
- Consider present and potential uses
- Weigh long vs. short term benefits

The planning area boundary includes State lands, USFS lands, and Tribal lands. The decision area encompasses about 7.3 million acres and excludes private lands, State lands, Indian Reservations, federal lands not administered by BLM, and lands within the Black Rock NCA.

Land use decisions are broad-scale multiple use decisions that will guide future management actions. They establish goals and objectives for resource management, identify lands that are open or closed for certain uses and provide comprehensive management direction for and allocate use of resource. BLM will look at what lands will be open for geothermal and oil and gas.

BLM wants to engage the public as often as we can in the planning process.

We have four cooperating agency partners, the City of Winnemucca, Humboldt County, Washoe County and USFWS.

Initial planning issues were defined through internal scoping. Final planning issues will be defined through the public scoping process. BLM will be doing an associated EIS.

Planning steps include:

- The NOI – published March 25, 2005. An RMP newsletter was also mailed.
- Public scoping meetings begin next week in Winnemucca, Lovelock, Gerlach and Reno.
- Management situation summary sheets will be available to the public at the scoping meetings. The public comment period will end May 25.
- Alternatives will be formulated based on public comment.
- A preferred alternative will be selected.
- A draft will be prepared.
- Publish Notice of Availability (NOA) and provide comment period.

The final EIS addresses all public comments received.

There is a 60-day Governor's consistency review.

Jeff showed the RAC a flow diagram of the process, including the required planning steps.

The Winnemucca RMP effort will take approximately four years. Completion date is 2008.

Planning criteria will be in compliance with FLPMA, NEPA and all other applicable laws, regulations and policies. Lands covered will be public land and split estate land managed by BLM. The plan will recognize the State's responsibility to manage wildlife and water, and will incorporate valid management decisions brought forward from existing planning documents. Decisions will be consistent with existing plans and policies of local, state, Tribal and federal agencies to the extent allowed by federal law.

Terry Reed asked if BLM has figured out how to carry forward disposals consistent with BACA. Jeff Johnson answered we haven't gotten into that level of detail yet, but will consider land tenure very carefully. Gail Givens added that we'll figure out a way to make that happen.

Current status of RMP

- Preplan signed April 29, 2004
- Contractor selected September 23, 2004
- Native American letters sent February 7, 2005
- Species list request was sent to USFWS February 8, 2005
- Cooperating agency letters sent February 16, 2005

What's next for FY 05?

BLM is trying to stick very closely to a schedule.

- Inventory and data collection (mineral report, leasing stipulations assessment, air quality, and cultural models)
- Public meetings & 60-day scoping period
- Two Native American meetings May 24 & 26
- Two social & economic workshops June 7 & 8. The contractor, Sonoma Institute, will go to each community for these workshops. The workshops are geared for the community. They will look at current and future trends, and how planning will affect the area.
- Scoping report
- Alternative development – based on public comment
- Start drafting chapters 1-3 of EIS

Vern Schulze asked if the RMP could affect the number of wild horses and burros and livestock permits and if this will be incorporated in the planning effort. Jeff Johnson answered we will look at HMAs. We can see possible changes in permitting. We will go through permit evaluations, those are the decisions that need to be brought forward in this effort. David Batts answered that the Standards and Guides will be incorporated into all the alternatives.

Craig Young commented that he is a member of a group creating an electronic database for known cultural resources.

Rochanne Downs commented, one of my concerns is I have gotten a letter from Ms. Bengsten. Consultation is the responsibility of BLM, not a contractor. Also how is confidentiality of cultural sites being handled, especially if the database is outside BLM? There are only two meetings, but there are more than two Tribes in the planning area. Consultation needs to be one on one with the Tribal councils. A letter is notification, not consultation. Jeff answered what is being presented here is just a part of the Native American consultation process. The consultant and ethnographer have been in contact with the Tribes through phone calls. The informational meetings have been set up. This is an ongoing process. Rochanne commented the Tribes should be at the very beginning of the process. The Tribes are coming at the end. I'm hearing "we're going to go later and talk to the Tribes." Jeff answered consultation is an ongoing process. There are no deadlines. We're not compartmentalizing, but it is still ongoing. Rochanne continued Tribes are sovereign governments not interested publics. Craig Young commented I don't know how much earlier in the process this could have happened. The letters have gone all the way to Pit River in Oregon. We will go to any Tribe that is interested in hearing our presentation. On the subject of confidentiality, the database is only for BLM in-house use to be used for planning purposes only. Any action will have to be through the permitting process. David Batts commented even the contractor people will not see the database. We're trying to run Tribal consultation as a parallel path in the planning process.

Larie Trippet commented the RAC had a subgroup that worked very hard to help write the NCA plan. I have asked whether the RAC has developed a subgroup for this effort, but you didn't mention that in your presentation. Jeff Johnson answered that the



presentation does mention that it is critical to have the involvement of the RAC. The next step would be to ask if the RAC would like to form a subgroup.

John Mudge asked how far out in the future the plan is expected to go. Jeff answered 15 years. We are already looking at increased population and increased mining use. John asked how specific BLM gets in looking at impacts, particularly air, water etc. Jeff answered we will look at cumulative impact analysis and reasonable, foreseeable future actions. John asked if the scoping period is the time when the public should get very specific with BLM on lands for disposal. Jeff answered that we have to differentiate between a scoping comment and a proposal for disposal. The comments we are looking for in the scoping would be more general.

Sherm Swanson commented I noticed in planning issues several that related to vegetation. How would the rangeland health idea get translated into a more specific vision that the public can get its mind around? Jeff answered we have goals and objectives for what we hope the land will look like. We also have implementation actions. The nuts and bolts are part of the implementation process. David Batts commented a subgroup discussion may go into more specific data.

Terry Reed commented the WFO has the basic data to move into the arena of fire planning, sage-grouse planning needs, has good soil and veg inventory, and how that changes because of fire. This is a good opportunity to put that into this planning effort. How will transportation and access fit into the RMP process? Jeff answered that what we'd be looking at is the recent national guidance in transportation. We will be making some OHV designations. My vision is that we will probably be looking at public input and resource value conflicts. We'll probably be looking at some areas for open, closed, and limited. Limitations are that the actual route designation process will have to take place during the implementation process. Terry commented this would be the ideal opportunity to create the criteria. Then you don't have to go back and amend the RMP.

Vern Schulze asked how the Sempra plan process meshes with the RMP. Jeff answered that the RMP public scoping meetings are next week. Sempra scoping meetings are the end of May. Vern asked if air quality analysis will be different in the RMP from the analysis in Sempra. Jeff answered yes.

Craig Young asked if the public comment process has to stop at 60 days. Jeff answered the scoping process is mandated. The intent of the planning effort is to engage and be involved with the public. Public input is critical to the process.

Bill Roullier commented that BLM should get very specific in asking for comments from the power companies.

Jeff formally requested that the RAC set up a subgroup for the planning effort. Involvement for the RAC would be to serve in an advisory role on the Alternatives. It would help expedite the process to come to the table with some Alternatives. BLM would like RAC review and input during critical stages of the process, assistance in

facilitating public input, and involvement through working groups. We would like some tracking of the input through the subgroup or workgroup meetings with some information available for the administrative record.

*RAC members volunteering or suggested as members of the Winnemucca RMP subgroup* – Jerry Hepworth, John Mudge, John Gebhardt, Patty Herzog, Rochanne Downs, Larie Trippet, Vern Schulze, and Sherm Swanson. Absent members Laura Crane, John Falen and Jim Eidel were nominated by their fellow RAC members. It was also suggested by the RAC that Humboldt County, Washoe County, USFWS, the City of Lovelock, Pershing County and an economic development entity and a sportsmen entity be invited to participate. Tebeau Piquet, former member of the RAC, was suggested as a member representing public-at-large.

It was suggested that participation in the subgroup could be opened up to the public. Jerry Hepworth and Larie Trippet will put together labels for the participating groups in the subgroup and then put some rep names to the labels in the near term.

Jeff Johnson asked that the number of members be limited to 15-20 people. He said he is hoping that the subgroup and work groups would include state and local agencies.

Sherm Swanson asked who gets to create the Alternatives and make the decisions. Jeff answered it's a BLM decision in the long run, but BLM would like to make the decisions with all of this input. My vision is that we would be working together to draft the Alternatives. BLM will come to the table with some alternatives so we are working from something. The intent is to have a close working relationship with the groups. Sherm asked if the subgroup would be the FACA chartered group for the collaborative process. Jeff answered it would be a primary focus. Jamie Thompson commented it's important to remember that the subgroup has to report to the RAC and because of that it is not necessary to publish meeting notices in the *Federal Register* announcing subgroup meetings. FACA compliance occurs when the subgroup's reports are made to the RAC at its public meetings.

Craig Young asked if the subgroup process will be explained at the public meetings.

Terry Reed commented there is some benefit from cross membership of the cooperating agencies in the subgroup. The guiding principle for the NCA subgroup was that individual opinion was important but consensus of the group was powerful and not questioned by the BLM Washington office.

Jamie Thompson commented we got specific dispensation for the NCA subgroup funding, but that is not the usual situation. Travel and per diem costs for this and other RAC subgroups would be funded only for current members of the RAC itself.

MOVED by – John Dicks that the RAC designate a subgroup to work on the Winnemucca RMP with the Winnemucca Field Office and to be constituted pursuant to the RAC charter, the three groups on the Council

and other groups invited to join on the advice of the RAC chair and vice chair.

SECOND – by Rochanne Downs.

DISCUSSION – Rochanne suggested that equal numbers from the RAC Pods be represented.

AMENDMENT to the motion – to include the list of members generated at the RAC meeting (see list above). The amendment was accepted by the Mover and Second.

PASSED – by acclamation.

John Dicks commented that people on the RAC who want to join are on the subgroup. There should be some blessing from the RAC chair and the designated federal official as to membership by members of the public.

Jeff told the RAC he would like to get the subgroup going before the July RAC meeting.

### **XIII. Wildfire Support Group Update**

Mike Whalen, WFO Fire Management Specialist, distributed a briefing paper to the RAC.

The Wildfire Support Group came as a suggestion from local ranchers to assist BLM in responding to multiple fires. Members of the group go through 40-hour rookie school training, have been issued protective clothing and radios, and are worked into the WildCAD system with the Central Nevada Interagency Dispatch Center. This year due to liability concerns with USFS and BLM, the qualifications have been more rigorous. Support group personnel who are going to be on the fireline, on arduous duty, must meet Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture physical requirements. They must take medical exams and complete the pack test. Some members of the group have opted to be equipment operators only thus not needing the comprehensive physical. Some have opted to fight fire for BLM only on their own ranches. Red cards will be issued to those taking the fireline refreshers and pack tests.

Monthly coordination meetings are being held with the operations people. The support group has been very effective.

When fire is reported by a member of the group the BLM incident commander will be on the scene as soon as possible.

There is an experiment in cooperation with UNR to graze cattle on cheat grass. A concurrent project is being implemented with Utah State University with a joint fire program with National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC), 50 acres with 10 acre plots in cooperation with John Falen. Utah studies will replicate wild fire conditions during the summer and will conduct controlled burns on the plots.

A full programmatic EA will be done for all 11 allotments involved in the project. Right now the WFO is focusing on one allotment and one pasture of another allotment that don't have any NEPA issues. This is a three-year project.

The monitoring components of the project are still to be completed. They are being put together outside of BLM.

Sherm Swanson commented the RAC was very interested in the monitoring of this project. Utah State is part of the monitoring. Mike answered that Utah State will publish monitoring results. Nevada Standards for rangeland health will be followed by the ranchers participating in the monitoring.

## **XIV. Soldier Meadow Project Update**

Joey Carmosino and Dave Lefevre, both Outdoor Recreation Planners, gave an overview of the recreation planning project going on at Soldier Meadow hot springs.

The Soldier Meadow hot springs is a culturally rich area, home to many candidate species and one listed species. In 1996 the Soldier Meadow Activity Plan was developed. The Black Rock Plan pushed the Soldier Meadow Recreation Management Plan back.

On April 30, 2004 there was a voluntary two-hour workshop at the joint session of the Sierra Front RAC and the Northeast California RAC to get suggestions for the plan.

This was a small group meeting using nominal group technique with 11 participants to discover what the best actions are that BLM can take. There was a presentation of issues, then brainstorming of ideas. Participants listed ideas around the table and discussed them. They came up with about 30 ideas.

The people were asked to vote on ideas. Each person was provided with seven ballots to list their concerns in order. The number one concern was that BLM develop campsites away from habitat. The group developed a list of actions.

The RAC was shown an aerial photo of the entire Soldier Meadow area.

BLM has developed a plan to concentrate use in one relatively undeveloped area.

Where we go now –

- May 14 and 15, 2005 have a volunteer project
- Contract in works for road construction and barrier work
- Toilet ready to go
- National Civilian Community Corps will be out June and September

The project should be completed prior to the hunting season rush.

BLM is restricting camping in the Soldier Meadow ACEC to designated sites and limiting the number of people who can camp there.

Sherm Swanson asked if the nominal group process voting led to some proposals people were opposed to. Joey answered 14 of the ideas proposed received votes. The 14 were ranked. Everyone was encouraged to put up on the board and discuss any idea they came up with. Some people were concerned with how BLM would interpret these. There was consensus on priority order.

The process was very structured and didn't take much time. The group came up with many of the ideas that were already in the plan. The process allowed BLM to present its ideas and then incorporate other ideas. The vote was anonymous. Ideas were framed by the guidance in the NCA RMP.

John Dicks congratulated Dave and Joey on their success with the group process. Resolution is headed in the right direction. He would like to see this approach with the Sand Mountain and Ruhenstroth issues. You sent follow-up letters to the group too.

BLM sent out survey letters. Over 80 percent of the people surveyed agreed the technique should be used for other processes.

John Dicks asked if there was any problem with people driving all the way up there and finding out they couldn't camp where they wanted to because it was full. Dave answered we had a lot of problems last year, but we'll try to get a kiosk put up this year to help people.

Dave Cooper commented the challenge is the implementation of the plan but we can probably get it implemented this year.

Larie Trippet asked if the hot springs camping area is full, can you take an ATV or motorcycle near the hot springs. Dave Lefevre answered the design has a parking area turnaround and a spur trail. You can park about 500 feet from the springs. Nevada revised statutes prohibit camping closer than 300 feet from a waterhole.

Vern Schulze asked how BLM guaranteed funding. Dave Lefevre answered there is no guarantee. The money is budgeted and comes out of the fee money collected for permits in the NCA.

The design of the plan is being tweaked constantly.

BLM just presented some sign ideas to the RAC implementation subgroup.

As an informational item Larie Trippet told the RAC that the Off Highway registration bill is not dead, but got an exemption. The email he got said that the bill is being watered down.

## **XV. Pine Nut Mountain RMP Amendment RAC Review of Chapters 1 and 2**

Don Hicks presented a Powerpoint reviewing Chapters 1 and 2. (A copy was emailed to RAC members on April 29<sup>th</sup>. Hardcopy is available upon request.)

This plan does not follow the mechanical outline for plans. The original plan was completed in 1985. The first plan amendment never went forward. The current effort began in 2001.

Public comments/scoping issues were identified at scoping meetings including designated access corridors/staging areas from the population areas into and out of the Pine Nuts.

The intent of the Alternatives is to make the plan workable for some time into the future.

John Dicks commented the way growth is occurring in the area I don't think you can meet the last bullet, "minimize the need for future land use plan amendments." Don answered there are things we can do now to think about where you want the major staging areas. We won't be able to hit everything. But we don't want to repeat the most recent history of the plan.

In the No Action = Continuation of Current Management Alternative natural processes are going to kick in, and under this Alternative BLM doesn't really have management practices to do something different. There is no designation of special areas or areas of critical environmental concern (ACEC). OHV use would remain open and unrestricted.

Proposed RMP Amendment –

- Identifies prospective parcels for disposal into either public sector (R&PP) or private sector.
- Restricts OHV use by designating whole area as limited to designated routes.
- Three ACECs would be designated as well as several special areas.
- Special Status Species will receive additional management prescriptions.
- Reduce number and width of utility corridors.
- Expand Burbank Canyon Scenic Area/WSA to include entire watershed boundary.

Generally mountain bikes are not allowed in wilderness areas, but BLM needs to look at this –

- Additional acres for mineral withdrawals.
- Herd management areas will be adjusted to address sage-grouse and urban interface issues.
- Designate a Wild Horse Center Management Area.

Larie Trippet asked if there will be an allowance for new trails. Don answered yes.

#### Conservation and Restoration Theme Alternative –

- Based on proposed action with the inclusion of more stringent management practices (OHV access and use restrictions).
- Fewer designated roads and trails.
- No permitted motorized events.
- No BLM land disposals in Douglas County.
- Three additional ACECs would be designated to focus on issues brought to BLM by the Tribes (Washoe, Yerington Paiute cultural areas, Honey Lake blue butterfly). These would not be in BLM's preferred Alternative. One reason is because they are huge areas.
- Additional mineral withdrawal acreage.

Craig Young asked if a piece of one Alternative can be put in another. Don answered that it can be done.

#### Program Comparisons Under Each Alternative –

##### Lands: No Action

- Retain lands not identified for disposal.
- Continue to acquire private lands for wildlife habitat.
- Provide 1,000 acres for disposal for community expansion and/or rec and public purposes act (R&PP).
- Manage existing withdrawals (WSA and Carson urban interface).

##### Lands: Proposed Alternative

- Designate 300,000 acres for retention primarily for protection of open space, sensitive plant and animal habitat, recreation, watershed, wildlife and cultural values.
- No development in plan area.
- Pursue protective withdrawal on 163,000 acres.
- Continue to work with local entities and landowners to provide public access or to ensure continued public access in the urban interface zone.

##### Lands: Conservation/Restoration

- Designate 304,000 acres for retention.
- 1,000 acres for disposal (none in Douglas County).
- Protective withdrawal of 308,000 acres.

#### Right-of-Way Corridors/Utilities –

##### No Action:

- Continue to utilize existing designated corridors.

##### Proposed Action:

- Consolidate and narrow corridors to reduce concerns about sensitive species.
- Utilize current communication sites and limit new development to existing sites.

#### Recreation OHV/OHV Designations –

##### No Action:

- Designated routes in Pine Nuts Mountain crest.

- Remainder of area is designated open.

Proposed Action:

- Within ACECs and Eldorado Canyon prohibit competitive and commercial motorized events, non-motorized events considered but limited to designated routes and trails.
- All OHV travel limited to designated roads and trails with exception of open play areas.

Conservation/Restoration:

- Limit to: Sunrise Pass Road, Pine Nut Road, Buckeye Road, Eldorado Canyon Road, Brunswick Canyon Road, and Churchill to Wellington Back Country Byway.
- No motorized races or events would be considered or permitted.

Special Management Areas –

No Action:

- No designated ACECs.
- Continue management of 13,395 acres of Burbank Scenic Area, currently a WSA.

Proposed Action –

- Designate 2,340 acres for Ruhenstroth Paleontological ACEC.
- Designate 5,900 acres for Churchill Narrows Buckwheat (include mineral withdrawal).
- Designate 762 acres as ACEC for Williams Combleaf (include mineral withdrawal).
- Burbank Canyon Scenic Area – expand boundaries from 13,400 to 30,300 acres to include entire watershed and contiguous scenic values.
- OHV travel in all designated areas would be limited to designated roads and trails.

Conservation/Restoration: Additions to proposed action

- 82,000 acres would be designated as a Washoe Cultural ACEC
- Yerington Paiute Tribe Cultural Area – designate 152,000 acres as an ACEC
- Withdraw all ACECs from mineral entry
- Limit OHV travel to designated routes
- Designate 2,640 acres as an ACEC on Hot Springs Mountain, fence entire site and close to grazing and all OHV use

Wild Horses –

No Action:

- Continue implementation of HMA plans in Pine Nut Northern Area
- Continue management of wild horse herds in accordance with current management decisions. No change in HMA boundary.

Proposed Action:

- Adjust HMA boundary to exclude sage-grouse nesting habitat and to be consistent with Carson City Urban Interface Plan.
- Reduce AML to reflect boundary change (21%).



- Designate 6,500 acres as National Wild Horse and Burro Visitor and Adoption Center

Conservation Theme is same as proposed action.

Soil, Water, Air, and Vegetative Resources –

Can take prescriptive actions to treat habitat that is pushing the threshold that Sherm Swanson has been talking about.

Special Status Species –

Take steps to improve marginal habitat and connect with unoccupied habitat. The RAC advised that dates for breeding needs to say “before and after” these dates.

Woodland Resources –

There is a huge push in Carson City and surrounding areas for biomass production. BLM is trying to find ways to facilitate this need.

Mineral Resources –

Basically there are very few things limited now. There would be a variety of withdrawals under locatable, leasable and saleable minerals. There are a lot of permitted sand and gravel operations. If there is an opportunity to permit new sand and gravel operations, BLM will try to move farther away from communities but still make materials available.

Timeframes –

- 5/1/05-6/15/05 – ID team reviews and revises Chapters 3 and 4 of EIS, based on the changes just made to the range of alternatives.
- 5/15/05 – NOI to WO.
- 6/15/05 – Chapters 3 & 4 CCFO management review, NSO briefing, complete revisions. Will share with RAC at July meeting.
- 8/15/05 – contractor receives document and produces printable copy.
- 9/1/05 – draft EIS available for 90-day review. RAC or RAC subgroup will look at draft.
- Early 2006 – Revise draft based on public comments and issue final EIS sometime at beginning of 2006.

Larie Trippet commented that BLM should share with public groups as soon as possible.

John Dicks commented it has been a long time since these groups have met. A short meeting with them would foster trust.

Don Hicks commented I’m feeling good about BLM getting where we want to go with this process.

## **XVI. Meeting adjourned at 11:49 am.**

MOTION - by Bill Roullier to adjourn the meeting.

SECOND - by John Gebhardt.

DISCUSSION -

APPROVED by acclamation.

**Note:** There will be an extended RAC field trip on July 28-29 to end up at Indian Creek Campground. Food will be provided. [Field Trip was subsequently cancelled.] The RAC will meet at the Carson City Field Office.